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SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU: ANNUAL TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (TIP) REPORT

REF: 06 STATE 202745

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) Guinea-Bissau is a source of children trafficked for forced agricultural work and begging, primarily in Senegal. Muslim Koranic teachers, known as marabouts, travel from Senegal or send intermediaries to convince parents to send children purportedly for a religious education. Those children are routinely beaten and subjected to harsh treatment; often their families never hear from them again. There are no statistics or reliable estimates on the scope of the problem. The GOGB has the political will to combat this issue, particularly in terms of prevention and assistance to victims. The Government has detained traffickers, including at least one marabout, but prosecution would mean getting tough with widely revered Muslim teachers, a politically unpopular measure. Police, however, are proactive in stopping traffickers and assisting victims.

12. (SBU) Children have been required to beg for food and money to receive education from Koranic schools for generations. Some fathers and community leaders who send children away to learn to read the Koran experienced similar situations, although abuse appears to be growing and education dwindling. Public discussion, radio programs, and solid NGO efforts, often in conjunction with police and government, have started to bear results, pushing traffickers into more remote areas to find subjects. However, there is also a strong sense among Muslim communities, local officials, and parliamentarians that parents will continue to send children away until the GOGB builds local Koranic schools.

13. (SBU) One NGO, "Associacao de Mulher e Crianca" (the Association for Women and Children, known as AMIC in Portuguese) leads coordination efforts for government, police, and civil society in terms of prevention and helping returned victims find their families. END SUMMARY.

14. (SBU) Responses are keyed to questions in reftel.

Begin TIP report:

PARA 27. OVERVIEW OF A COUNTRY'S ACTIVITIES TO ELIMINATE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

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1A. Guinea-Bissau is a country of origin for trafficked children for forced begging, primarily to Senegal and to a lesser extent Mali and Guinea. Children are sent by their parents with a marabout or intermediary to study the Koran. Key source areas are the cities of

Bafata and Gabu in the east. Instead of getting an education, children are generally forced to beg and remit daily payments of anywhere from 50 cents to one U.S. dollar plus a kilo of rice to the marabout. Failure to meet daily quotas earns severe beatings. Some Koranic schools in Guinea-Bissau also require children to beg in the long-standing tradition of these schools, but with less abuse and more education than they get abroad. Some marabouts have plantations and require children, primarily boys but also some girls, to work in fields doing seasonal agricultural work. Boys then are sent to cities to beg in the off season.

No studies have been completed on the scope of human trafficking in or from Guinea-Bissau, and no reliable estimates exist. The GOGB repatriated 92 children from Senegal in 2006 and says there are many more. Two children were repatriated from Guinea-Bissau, one to Senegal and one to Guinea.

1B. Parents of young children are approached by religious leaders or intermediaries, usually from neighboring Senegal, and offered the chance to send children for a religious education where they will be taught to read the Koran. Because of traditional links between Islamic communities across borders and the existence of extended families where distant relatives may be considered "uncles," the trafficker is often known to the parents. There are only a few Koranic schools in Guinea-Bissau, but they are not highly regarded; so parents often feel that sending sons abroad is the only hope for a religious education. Marabouts are highly respected in Muslim society (the majority population in target areas) and are able to operate with little interference. Parents receive no compensation for sending their children and in many cases, pay for the initial travel.

Begging is an old practice at Koranic schools, and some middle-aged adults in Guinea-Bissau went through similar experiences as youths.

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However, physical abuse of children and profits for marabouts have become common while education has all but disappeared. The historical link between begging and Koranic schools creates a level of acceptance among community members and impedes efforts by NGOs and government to convince parents to stop sending children. AMIC noted that some institutions (which they term "madrassas") are better than others and require little begging.

The primary route to Senegal is through the town of Pirada, where there are police and migration controls. Another key exit point is the town of Sao Domingos in the west. Almost all traffic is overland, reportedly by foot, taxi or animal driven carts to the border. Non-vehicular traffic can easily avoid border outposts by walking on foot trails through the bush. Border guards are aware of the problem and according to the leading national NGO on trafficking, AMIC, cooperate on interdiction and repatriation. Yet remoteness, low salaries that are sometimes unpaid for months at a time, and respect for marabouts makes guards vulnerable to bribes.

Living conditions for trafficked children on the streets of Senegal's cities can be heartbreaking. Children who cannot raise the daily payment are beaten so severely that they often don't return, choosing to sleep in the street rather than face punishment.

It is common for families to go years without receiving any word from children. Some children seek help from NGOs, neighborhood women whom they adopt as mother figures or the Bissau-Guinean Embassy in Dakar. Others simply walk back to Guinea-Bissau. Some parents seek help from police or NGOs to reunite with children, but they are the exception. One significant improvement this year is the number of children repatriated from Senegal. Repatriations and reinsertion in families and schools require significant cooperation between NGOs, governments, police and border officials, families and schools. Last year, 92 children benefited from that cooperation.

Political will exists to assist victims and prevent trafficking through raising awareness, especially in key institutions such as the government's Institute of Women and Children, the Department of Justice, the Foreign Ministry, and among individuals throughout the police force. In the GOGB's 2006 National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, root causes of trafficking are addressed, including

intervention and awareness for street children and those engaged in the worst forms of child labor; improving education and nutrition; and strengthening the government institutions charged with protection. Unfortunately, the plan received little support at the donor's round table in Geneva last November. Despite these efforts, there is no high-level coordinated initiative to fight TIP. There is little evident political will to confront TIP in terms of prosecutions. According to several people interviewed from local governments and NGOs, enforcement against marabouts is a politically complicated issue because politicians believe any action against them will be interpreted by a major voting bloc as action against the Islamic faith. The Government has detained one marabout and other traffickers but has yet to successfully prosecute any.

1C. Guinea-Bissau lacks almost everything. Police forces have received no training on trafficking. They do not have vehicles to patrol borders; instead they rely on foot patrols. Communication from border police in Pirada to the central police headquarters in Gabu, about two hours away by bus and where traffickers are supposed to be sent once detained, is by landline phone which is often out of service. Police in Gabu have only one computer and no effective archive system to facilitate case research. Police are receiving regular, albeit delayed salaries. Repatriated victims sometimes live with the Gabu police commissioner until parents can be found, a process that sometimes takes months because children do not remember where they are from. Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to Senegal also houses children awaiting repatriation when no alternative can be found. There is no shelter in Gabu, which receives a steady trickle of children returning from Senegal in search of families.

While corruption is likely a factor in the remote towns and border areas, AMIC believes there is no high-level corruption on this issue, and no one in the Government is getting rich off the trafficking of children.

1D. The GOGB does not make systematic efforts and does not publish assessments of its performance. A police inspector under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior has official responsibility for coordinating the government enforcement response and cooperation with UNICEF, but these efforts are poorly organized.

PARA 28. PREVENTION

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1A. The Government recognizes the trafficking problem and combats it on many fronts. The Government contributes eight million CFA francs (CFAF) (about USD 16,000) per year to the operating budget of AMIC, the country's strongest advocate in fighting trafficking of children.

1B. Agencies involved include the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, and the Institute of Women and Children. There is no task force; so no agency has a clear lead.

1C. AMIC conducts regular awareness efforts on radio stations in the Gabu area. Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to Senegal has also contributed to awareness efforts on the radio. These efforts are aimed at parents in Muslim communities, notifying them of the dangers of sending their children away for Koranic studies. AMIC notes some effectiveness, saying the city itself continues to see a drop in trafficked children, but traffickers are moving out to outlying areas where people are not yet as well-informed. AMIC and police also use radio as a last resort in searching for parents of repatriated children.

1D. As part of a reinsertion program for trafficking victims implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), AMIC, and Senegalese NGOs, the Government assists in repatriating and educating children and families to avoid re-trafficking. This program consists of educating parents, getting children in school, and follow-up visits to check progress and track children. Migration officials at Pirada claim they do not let anyone leave the country with a child unless the parent is present, due to trafficking concerns. Of course the border remains porous, and guards may be corrupt or unprofessional.

¶E. Relevant actors cooperate well and recognize the importance of close coordination. AMIC reports that it gets very good cooperation from local police in assisting repatriated children and finding parents. There are a good understanding of issues and updated policies by border police and migration officials to stop traffickers from moving children out of the country. AMIC and police work with religious and community leaders in the regions of Gabu and Bafata. UNICEF says the Ministry of Justice and the Muslim NGO ALANSAR are very strong on the issue. Perhaps the biggest and most noticeable gap is the courts, which could not point to any successful prosecutions where traffickers served time. Another concern is the inspector at the Ministry of the Interior who claims to be the coordinator on enforcement but does not have a clear picture of prosecution efforts.

¶F. The Government does not systematically monitor its borders for TIP, but border guards have been educated by AMIC. Immigration officials described a process they follow when they identify a potential trafficker: they detain the male adults if they cannot prove they are the fathers, contact the police in Gabu, and arrange transportation back to police headquarters in Gabu. Unfortunately, these are barely treated as crimes, and traffickers are generally released while parents are contacted to pick up their children.

Police claim to have increased foot patrols of the border on the many paths through the bush into Senegal to stem trafficking.

¶G. With a number of security concerns in the country, such as increased international drug trafficking and the urgent need for security sector reform of the bloated, violence-prone military, and numerous social problems such as a lack of access to adequate education and health care for most of its citizens, TIP has not surprisingly been low on the priority list. However, even with these other issues, the Government is doing what it can with the few resources it has available to it. The Ministry of Interior has an inspector in charge of crimes against children who is responsible for coordination on law enforcement of TIP and cooperation with UNICEF. The Institute of Women and Children has taken the lead with respect to public awareness and marshalling efforts of the government and the international community. The National Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee for Women's and Children's Issues attempted to get TIP on the legislative agenda last year, but due to a deeply entrenched political crisis that left the body almost paralyzed, no new TIP legislation was passed. The most effective actors continue to be NGOs and international organizations.

¶H. There is no national plan of action to combat TIP.

PARA 29. INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS

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¶A. There has been no new legislation since the last report. There is no law specifically prohibiting trafficking in people. Other laws are currently being used, although they are weakly applied. Laws against removal of minors, sexual exploitation, abuse, and kidnapping of minors may be used to prosecute trafficking cases. Prostitution is illegal, as is pimping.

¶B. There is no trafficking law, but the law against kidnapping, which may be used in child trafficking, carries a penalty of two to ten years in prison.

¶C. Guinea-Bissau is not a source or destination country for labor abuses and as such has no specific legislation dealing with the crime. When children are exploited for labor, it is usually through promises of education that traffickers lure them into servitude, not through legitimate offers of employment with contracts.

¶D. The penalty for rape is between one and five years in prison. Sex trafficking is not specifically covered under the law and in fact does not appear to be a widespread problem in Guinea-Bissau.

¶E. The activities of the prostitute, brothel owner, pimp, and customer are all criminalized. There are no statistics on

enforcement of this crime.

F. There have been no successful prosecutions of traffickers. Police are generally aware of their responsibility when it comes to protecting children from traffickers, and they often take appropriate action. In most cases, this involves coordinating with NGOs on repatriations. In February, immigration officials on the border of Guinea worked with police in the city of Gabu to detain a marabout named Mohamed Bah who entered Guinea-Bissau illegally with 29 young boys, all nationals of Guinea. No documents were presented at the border crossing. Police contacted AMIC for assistance caring for the children and also the Public Ministry for assistance in repatriating them. The marabout's intent is not certain, but AMIC and officials suspect it was trafficking. It is not clear if Guinea-Bissau was the intended destination or a transit country.

G. Marabouts from Senegal are the primary traffickers, although few legitimate marabouts are traffickers. They sometimes use intermediaries with community connections to recruit and transport children to Koranic schools. In most cases, they are known to communities in which they operate, AMIC, and the police. Some have been photographed by police for the purpose of prevention. They operate in the open, protected by their stature in the Muslim community and the fact that politicians in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal do not have the temerity to confront them.

H. The Government does not actively investigate most cases of trafficking, but police are proactive in stopping traffickers and assisting victims.

I. The Government does not provide any special training on trafficking but has said it welcomes any training that foreign governments or international organizations can provide. To put this in context, no policemen have received any kind of training since 1999. Those who joined the force since then have never received formal training in conducting any kind of police work.

J. Police in Gabu have worked with police in Senegal in the past, but there were no records of joint investigations during the reporting period.

K. The Government is not prohibited from extraditing its nationals but has no record of being asked to do so for TIP.

L. There is no evidence of government involvement in TIP.

M. No GOGB officials are known to have been involved in trafficking.

N. There is little tourism in Guinea-Bissau, and there are no reports of child sex tourism.

O. The Government has not ratified ILO Convention 182 concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.

ILO Conventions 29 and 105 on forced or compulsory labor were both ratified February 21, 1977.

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The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography was signed on September 8, 2000 and is in the ratification process.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime was signed on December 14, 2000 but not yet ratified.

PARA 30. PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

A. A lack of resources keeps the Government from providing many services for victims besides basic transportation back from Senegal. Benevolent individuals, some with the Government, some with police,

and some NGOs, provide most other assistance.

¶B. Most significant funding comes from abroad. The Government continues to contribute about USD 16,000 to AMIC's annual operating budget. It cooperates and coordinates closely with UNICEF, Save the Children (Dakar), and other foreign NGOs. For example, UNICEF announced in February it would contribute USD one million to an education and prevention campaign in Guinea-Bissau. The Institute of Women and Children will be the implementing agency for the Government.

¶C. Police in the primary source areas of Gabu and Bafata generally coordinate with AMIC to assist victims and locate parents.

¶D. Victims are not punished or persecuted in any way by anyone other than their traffickers.

¶E. Nothing impedes victims from seeking justice from their traffickers other than a cultural perception that marabouts are above the law.

¶F. See above.

¶G. The Bissau-Guinean Embassy in Senegal is a leader in the fight against trafficking. It coordinates closely with NGOs in Senegal and the Red Cross to identify, assist, and repatriate victims. It uses its operating budget to fund assistance efforts and is reimbursed upon justification to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¶H. The GOGB provides shelter, medical aid, and food generally with the assistance of NGOs and the Red Cross.

¶I. As noted above, the Government has no funds to support even a modest victim assistance program. It relies heavily on NGO and international donor support not just for TIP assistance, but for many basic government functions, including payment of civil service salaries. A non-exhaustive list includes the Red Cross, AMIC, RADDHO (Dakar), Save the Children (Dakar), UNICEF and IOM.

¶5. (U) The TIP officer for Guinea-Bissau, Gregory Holliday, who is resident in Dakar, Senegal, can be reached by phone at 221-823-4296 x2415 and by e-mail at hollidaygx@state.gov. Embassy TIP officer spent approximately 20 hours preparing for this year's TIP report. Embassy Dakar Pol FSN spent about 5 hours.

JACOBS